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ABSTRACT

Questionnaires were sent to 100 women employed in leisure service positions in Wisconsin. Areas of services included therapeutic recreation, community/school and voluntary/youth agencies, outdoor recreation and parks, and a variety of other miscellaneous fields such as combinations of the above, industrial recreation, college unions, etc. Positions included leadership roles such as therapists or program leaders, technical jobs, supervisory roles, and administrative positions. Findings revealed that, overall, the women have positive attitudes about their own leisure. It was also found that women in leisure service professions have androgynous personality characteristics which allow them to be both masculine and feminine, agentic and communal, and assertive and nurturing. In general, women in leisure services tend to be more nontraditional in their sex-role orientation. Results also indicated that few differences exist among the women surveyed in terms of demographics and personality, and age appeared to be the primary differentiating factor among the women in this study. (JD)

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An Analysis of Selected Characterisitics, Leisure Attitudes, and Recreation Participation of Women Employed in Leisure Services

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Women are becoming more visible in a variety of professions. This is particularly true in leisure services with the increasing numbers of women being employed as well as the increased numbers of students in professional preparation programs. Although a number of studies have focused on the park, recreation, and leisure service professionals, few of these studies have really addressed women beyond perhaps a description of the differences between men and women.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the characteristics (including selected demographic and personality attributes), leisure attitudes, and recreation participation of women employed in leisure services. To obtain this data, mailed questionnaires were sent to a random sample of 100 women employed in leisure service positions in Wisconsin. The study was conducted during the winter of 1982. Follow-up techniques were used to obtain a 70% response rate. The data were coded and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. In addition, several of the questions were qualitatively analyzed.

To provide a framework for analysis, the following demographic characteristics described the sample of women:

> Forty percent of the women represented non-profit organizations, 21% were employed by the state or federal government, 10% were employed by the county, 9% were employed by a municipality or school district, and 12% were employed by a private agency.
>
> Areas of leisure services included 37% being in therapeutic recreation, 20% in both community/school and voluntary/youth agencies, 9% in outdoor recreation and parks, and 14% in a variety of other miscellaneous fields such as combinations of the above, industrial recreation, college unions, etc.
>
> The job titles of the individuals were grouped according to the standard classifications of employment levels in recreation. In this sample, 44% held positions in leadership roles such as therapists, program leaders, or technical jobs; 20% were in supervisory roles such as program supervisors and HPER supervisors; and 34% were employed in administrative positions such as center directors, executive directors, camp directors, etc.

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On the average, the women in the study had been employed 5.7 years in their present position while they had been employed in leisure services for an average of 8.3 years. The number of years employed in leisure services ranged from 1 to 31.

The average age of the participants was 34.7 years but 46% of the sample were under the age of 30.

Eighty-seven percent of the women had a B.S. degree with the most common majors being recreation or physical education. Over 17% held a masters degree but 48% of the women had taken formal course work within the past five years.

The marital status of the participants included 47% who were married, 40% who were single, and 13% who were divorced or widowed. Sixty-nine percent had no children living at home while 18% had one child and 13% had two or more children still at home.

Leisure Attitudes and Recreation Involvement

A 10-item leisure attitude scale developed by Crandall (1981) which uses a 4-point Likert scale was used to ascertain the leisure attitudes of these women in leisure services. The practical question which was to be answered concerned whether women in leisure services "practiced what they preached". The statement which received the most agreement from the women was the statement "it is good for adults to be playful" with 100% agreement on the statement. "I admire a person who knows how to relax", "leisure is great", and "I don't feel guilty about enjoying myself" all had over 94% agreement. Only 20% of the women were in agreement with the statement "I would like to lead a life of complete leisure."

The responses to these ten items were added together to compute a leisure attitude score. The average score for these female leisure service professionals was 32.5 out of a potential 40 point total. This was slightly above the average for most people who have responded to this scale.

Analysis of variance was used to ascertain if any differences existed among women of varying demographic characteristics. Significant differences were found in relation to the age of the professionals. It was very evident that the younger one was, the higher the leisure attitude score. Women who were 20-30 years old averaged scores of 33.9, women who were 31-40 had an average score of 32.4, and women who were over 41 had an average score of 30.5.

No significant differences were found between leisure attitudes and marital status, number of children living at home, educational level or area of leisure services. However, it was

evident that significant differences existed among women having different job titles. Those who were classified as as having direct leadership roles had higher leisure attitude scores compared to the supervisors and administrators. The administrators had the lowest scores. A direct relationship in this case probably relates to the age of the women since the "career ladder" would logically reflect progress in job function as one becomes older.

Related to leisure attitudes, the recreation activity involvement was also of interest. The most frequent types of recreation activities of these female professionals were nature/travel/ outdoor activities, followed by sports. The data indicated that 27% of the respondents participated in some kind of recreation activity at least one to two times a week. Eleven percent of the women professionals said they were involved in some kind of daily recreation activity. Professionals said that 35% of the time they participated with a friend while 21% of the time they did the activity alone.
Nine percent of the activities were done with the family and/or a friend and 7% of the activities were done with the spouse.

Age was a significant demographic factor related to the number of recreation activities in which a woman participated. Younger professionals participated in recreational activities more frequently than did older professionals. This finding paralleled the results of the leisure attitude scale which showed that younger women had higher leisure attitudes and thus, would likely participate in more leisure activities.

Statistical significance was found between the leisure service areas and the number of recreation activities in which an individual participated. Women in parks and therapeutic recreation participated in more recreation activities than did those women who were employed in community recreation or in voluntary/youth organizations.

Personality Characteristics

The personality characteristics were another area of interest regarding these women in leisure services. To ascertain these characteristics, the BEM Sex Role Inventory (Bem 1981) was used to identify the tendency toward masculine, feminine, or androgynous personality traits. The intent of this portion of the study was to learn how women leisure service professionals perceived their own personality in contrast to what is culturally defined as stereotypic feminine or masculine.

The Bem Sex-Role Inventory consisted of 60 self-rated items which reflected perceived personality traits. These traits were then classified as masculine or feminine based on cultural definitions of sex role stereotypes. A further classification of this scale allowed people to be called androgynous. Androgyny refers to a psychological concept which implies that it is

possible for an individual to possess both stereotypically masculine and feminine attributes as defined by the culture.

Female professionals in this study had higher scores on the masculine traits than on the feminine traits and were overall classified as androgynous.

No statistically significant differences were found among the women of varying demographic characteristics in relation to the Bem Sex Role Inventory scale and their androgyny scores. Job title, leisure service area, age, education, or marital status had no bearing on the scores.
It had been anticipated that perhaps women employed in such "nurturing", "typical female jobs" as therapeutic recreation might possess different scores in stereotypic traits than those employed in "masculine" areas such as parks and community recreation. However, this was not evident in this study.

No relationship was found between androgyny scores and the scores on the leisure attitude scale. Since androgyny and high leisure attitudes are somewhat "non-traditional", it was hypothesized that an association might exist between the two, but no relationship was found in this study.

Sex Role Socialization

A final set of characteristics which were investigated in this study related to traditional verses non-traditional sex role orientations. A scale was used to assess the attitudes of these female professionals in leisure services toward sex roles in the society. With this scale, the higher the score, the more non-traditional is one's sex role orientation.

The average score for these women employed in leisure services was 159 which was higher than the scores found in the general public. High agreement existed among the responses on many of the items in the scale. For example, 97% of the women agreed that "the relative amounts of time and energy devoted to a career on the one hand, and to home and family on the other hand, should be determined by one's personal desires and interests rather than by one's sex". A number of the professionals were undecided related to some of the sex role orientation statements. For example, while only 3% agreed that "it is more important for a wife to help her husband's career than to have a career herself", 11% of the women were undecided.

No statisitical significance was found among the demographic characteristics of the women and the sex-role orientation scores except in regard to age. Women who were over 41 years of age had the most traditional scores (score=152) and women who were 31-40 had the most non-traditional scores (score=168). Those women professionals who were 20-30 had a score of 156 which was much closer to the older women in the study. It was evident that the 31-40 year olds were by far the

most non-traditional as might be expected since these women are likely products of the women's movement of the 70's.

A distinct relationship was found between leisure attitude scores and the sex-role orientation scale. Women who scored highest in non-traditional sex role orientation also scored highest in leisure attitudes. This might suggest some parallel in the society between changing sex-role attitudes and leisure attitudes at least among women.

Conclusions and Implications

As a result of this exploratory study, several conclusions can be drawn. These, in turn, lead to implications for other research related to working women, women in leisure services, and the role of leisure and recreation in the lives of women.

This study can be summarized in the following statements:

1. Overall, women in leisure services in Wisconsin have positive attitudes about their own leisure.

2. Women in leisure services have androgynous personality characteristics which allow them to be both masculine and feminine, agentic and communal, assertive and nurturing.

3. In general, women in leisure services tend to be more non-traditional in their sex-role orientations.

4. Few differences exist among the women in terms of demographics and personality. Age appeared to be the primary differentiating factor among women in this study. In other words, within this sample, the women were more alike than unalike.

Because more women are choosing careers in leisure services, it is important to know who they are so some of the sex-stereotyping within leisure services can be understood and addressed. This study has only begun to describe some of the characteristics of women employed in leisure services, but it does provide a basis for further understanding women in the field.

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